



News Release

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MSHA commemorates second annual Mine Rescue Day

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Department of Labor’s [Mine Safety and Health Administration](#) will commemorate the second annual Mine Rescue Day on Thursday, Oct. 30, during a meeting of the [Holmes Mine Rescue Association](#) at the [National Mine Health and Safety Academy](#) in Beaver, West Virginia.

“Mine rescue is among the most risky and challenging rescue work undertaken in this country,” said [Joseph A. Main](#), assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health.

“These brave rescuers often travel miles in the dark, navigating underground mine workings filled with debris and poisonous and explosive gases after devastating mine fires, explosions or cave-ins, trying to find missing miners or recovering those who did not survive,” said Main. “We owe these volunteers from the mining community the best training and support available for such high-risk missions. And on Mine Rescue Day, we especially owe them the recognition they deserve for putting their own lives on the line to help their fellow miners.”



Mine rescue teams practice their fire-fighting skills in a simulated emergency scenario at the National Mine Health and Safety Academy in Beaver, West Virginia.



Teams of miners trained in first aid and rescue work participate in the first national mine safety demonstration in Pittsburgh on Oct. 20, 1911.

The date for Mine Rescue Day was selected because of its historic significance. On Oct. 30, 1911, the first national mine rescue demonstration was held in the United States. It was organized by [Dr. Joseph A. Holmes](#), who, in 1910, was appointed as the first director of the U.S. Bureau of Mines by President William Howard Taft. Holmes and Taft attended the inaugural event at Forbes Field in Pittsburgh.

On this date last year, the newly created national Holmes Mine Rescue Association, which mine emergency response stakeholders overwhelmingly supported, formally came into existence. The HMRA provides support and guidance for mine rescue to the more than 13,000 mines throughout the country. It also serves as a vehicle to disseminate guidelines, training and tools to the mining community.

In 2010, MSHA began an extensive review of mining community’s [mine emergency response](#) strategies to identify shortcomings, and that evaluation process has resulted in several actions and improvements. In addition to the creation of the HMRA MSHA has:

- invested in the development of state-of-the-art technology to make mine rescue safer and quicker;

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- added a new mine rescue response station in Madisonville, Kentucky, to service the Midwest;
- upgraded the agency's mobile response vehicles and command center equipment;
- held mock mine emergencies with mining companies;
- revised the criteria for [mine rescue team certification](#) to include hands-on skills training; and
- overhauled the national mine rescue training contests, which has led to greater stakeholder participation.

In conjunction with MSHA, the [National Mining Association](#) sponsored the [2013 National Coal Mine Rescue contest](#) in Columbus, Ohio; and the [Central Kentucky Mine Rescue Association](#) sponsored the [2014 National Metal and Nonmetal Mine Rescue Contest](#) in Lexington, Kentucky. Earlier this month, the [Mining Technology and Training Center](#), in Prosperity, Pennsylvania, sponsored and hosted the [Nationwide Coal Mine Rescue Skills Championship](#).

Plans currently are underway for the 2015 National Coal Mine Rescue Contest.

“In additions to the actions we have taken at MSHA, many state agencies and mining companies have upgraded their mine emergency response capabilities, systems and equipment,” said Main. “This has been a collaborative effort from the start, and it is paying real dividends.”

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